

# *European Wilderness Network*

## *Rila Wilderness*



2018

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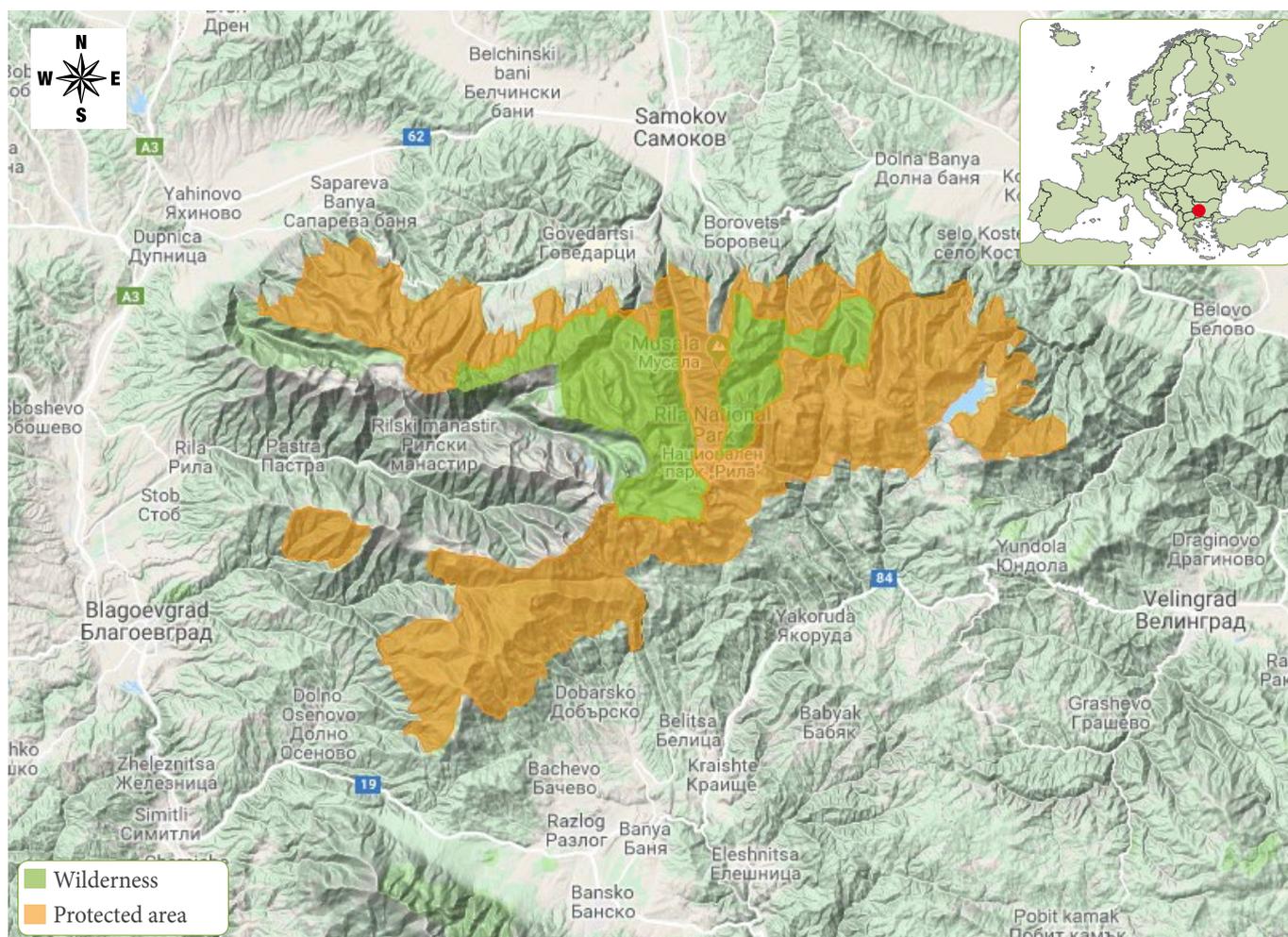
*Let's get Wild!*

# Rila Wilderness, Bulgaria

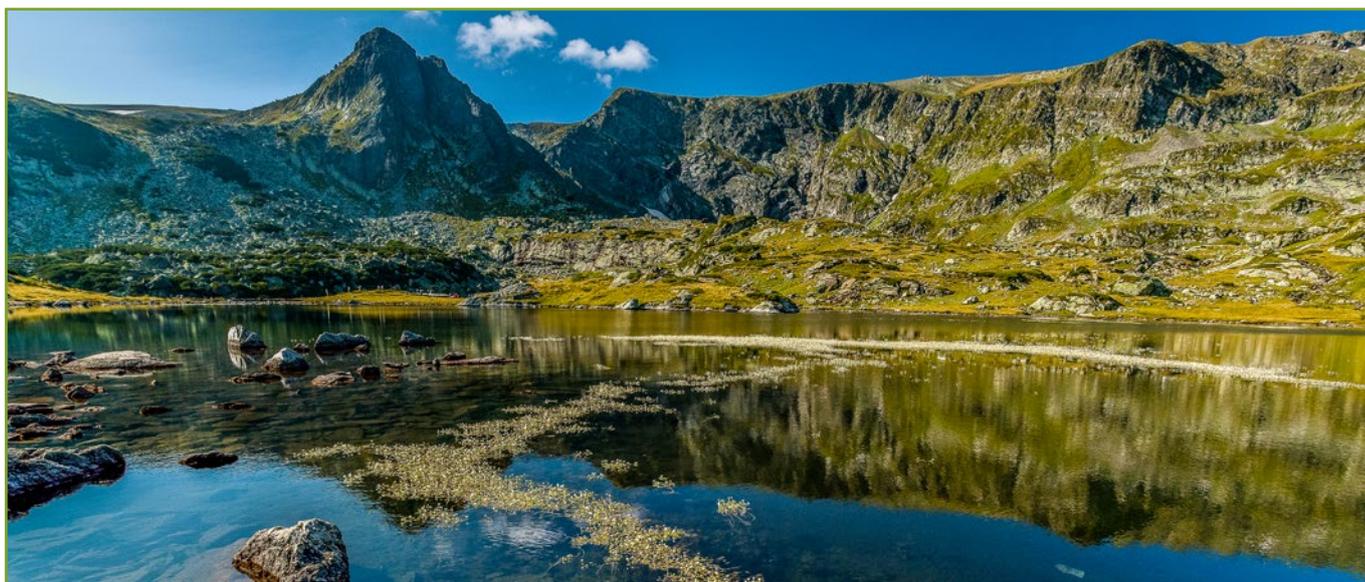
The 16 222 ha Rila Wilderness is embedded in the Rila National Park, the largest national park in Bulgaria. The park is located in the south-western part of the country. Rila National Park was established in 1992 to protect several ecosystems and Wilderness areas of national importance. The park's altitude varies from 800 metres near Blagoevgrad to 2 925 metres at Musala Peak, the highest summit in the Balkan Peninsula.

Rila Wilderness is one of the largest and most valuable Wilderness areas in Europe. It includes four large Wilderness areas - Parangalica, Central Rila Reserve, Ibar and Skakavitza. All these areas apply non-intervention management as the underlying principle for Wilderness management and all these areas fully meet the European Wilderness Quality Standard. Rila Wilderness covers a large part of the Rila mountain range with high peaks, deep valleys, forests and mountain pastures. The endemic flora and invertebrate fauna of the Wilderness are of global significance. Rila Wilderness is also rich with high mountain glacial lakes. Of particular value are the forest ecosystems with their high percentage of naturalness, which have endemic forest complexes including Macedonian pine and wide expanses of dwarf pine at the timberline.

| Wilderness information                            |  |
|---|--|
| Protected area                                    | Rila National Park   |
| Wilderness  | Rila Wilderness  |
| Country   | Bulgaria   |
| Size of the protected area                        | 81 046 ha  |
| Size of the Wilderness                            | 16 222 ha  |
| First Audit                                       | 2005   |
| Most Recent Audit                                 | 2010   |
| Wilderness Uniqueness                             | Old-growth mixed forest, alpine meadows, deep canyons, gorges, waterfalls, rare species such as wolf, bear, capercaillie, hazel grouse, and eagles |
| Number of visitors per year to the protected area | approx. 60 000   |
| Number of visitors per year to the Wilderness     | approx. 25 000   |



Map scale 1 : 1 000 000



## European Wilderness Quality Standard Audit System

The 16 222 ha Rila Wilderness was audited in 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010 and meets the Platinum Wilderness Quality Standard. A European Wilderness Quality Standard Renewal-Audit is scheduled for 2020.

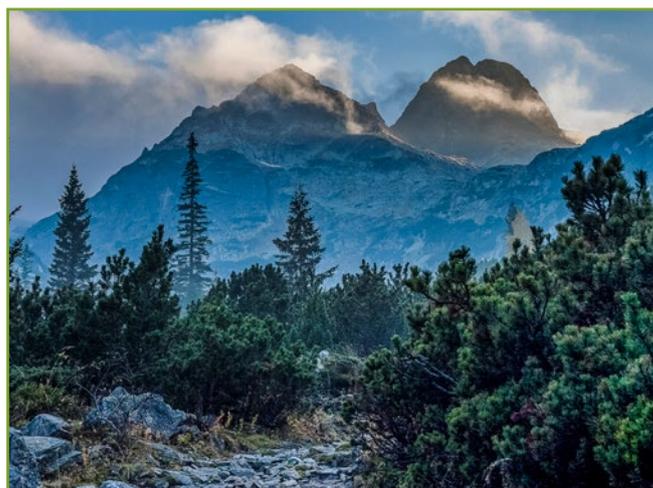
## Biodiversity

The Rila Wilderness falls within the Rodope montane mixed forest terrestrial ecoregion of the Palearctic Temperate broadleaf and mixed forest. Forests occupy more than half of the Rila Wilderness area. There are approximately 1 400 species of vascular plants, 282 species of mosses and 130 species of freshwater algae recorded in Rila National Park. The fauna is represented by 48 species of mammals, 99 species of birds, 20 species of reptiles and amphibians and 5 species of fish, as well as 2 934 species of invertebrates, of which 282 are endemic.

Rila Wilderness is home to rare and endangered wildlife species and communities, self-regulating ecosystems of biological diversity, as well as historical sites of global cultural and scientific significance. The terrain includes large high-mountain meadows, vertical rock faces, precipices, deep canyons, waterfalls, and numerous peaks, of which many are situated at altitudes of 2 000 metres and higher.

## Wilderness Tourism Experience

The Rila Wilderness is a well-known spot for tourists, naturalists, and scientists. A set of specialised routes including equestrians and mountain bike trails have been developed, as well as thematic routes for bird, plant, and large mammal watching. The trails crossing the Rila Wilderness are carefully managed and monitored. There are a number of tourist chalets scattered throughout the Rila National Park, some of them close to the border of Rila Wilderness, operated by the Bulgarian Tourism Union.



## **Contact**

### **Rila Wilderness**

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Let's  
Get  
Wild!

## European Wilderness Society

Founded on more than 20 years of Wilderness work by our members, the European Wilderness Society is the only Pan-European, Wilderness and environmental advocacy non-profit, non-government organisation.

It has a dedicated multi-cultural and experienced team of Wilderness and wildlife specialists, nature conservationists, researchers and scientists, tourism experts, marketing and business professionals, legal advisors and Wilderness advocates, whose mission is to:

- ▶ identify
- ▶ designate
- ▶ steward
- ▶ promote

Europe's last Wilderness, WILDCoasts, WILDForests, WILDIslands and WILDRivers. Here non-human intervention leads to open-ended, dynamic processes.

This is conveyed through a range of projects that facilitate Wilderness knowledge exchange, including education, culture and science, from local community through to scientific and governmental level.

## European Wilderness Network

The European Wilderness Network connects Europe's wildest places. Certified by the European Wilderness Quality and Audit System, these unique areas host diverse wild ecosystems governed by dynamic open-ended processes, with no or minimum human-intervention. The Network includes, for example, Europe's last primeval beech forests, the arctic tundra, and mountain landscapes in different climate conditions. It aims to promote Europe's last Wilderness, WILDCoasts, WILDForests, WILDIslands and WILDRivers, with a comprehensive marketing strategy. The European Wilderness Network offers a platform to share Wilderness Stewardship best-practice examples and Wilderness research. It connects like-minded Wilderness managers and advocates and fosters the exchange of ideas and knowledge across Europe and the world through the European Wilderness Exchange Programme.

For more information please see <http://european-wilderness.network>

### European Wilderness Society

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